

Proposal for Annual Maintenance of Ball Fields at the Patsy T. Mink Central Oahu Regional Park (CORP)

Summary

The high utilization of the baseball and softball facilities at Patsy T. Mink Central O’ahu Regional Park (CORP) have outpaced the current maintenance program. Despite year-round usage as one of the island’s most popular park venues, these facilities have not received adequate rehabilitation in over two decades. In most other municipalities, off-season weather enables park staff to rest their fields from the regular wear-and-tear of recreational public use on an annual basis. As a result, the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is now proposing a robust annual maintenance program to raise these outdoor amenities to an excellent standard.

The proposed plan calls for the temporary closure of two fields per year for a maximum duration of three months (June – August). This time frame is also ideal for grass growth. Field selection will be a maximum of one field per type (Adult baseball, Youth baseball, Softball). This program will begin in June 2023. The success of the program will determine how the annual maintenance program will continue in the future.

In order to gauge community feedback and provide transparency to these proposed actions, DPR is seeking comment and support from the ball field users and general public. This proposal outlines the preferred annual maintenance program for the ball fields at the CORP and the plan for understanding public interest and support levels for this program primarily through an online survey.

Goal: Refurbish all 12 ball fields (baseball and softball) at CORP in six years or less beginning in June 2023. This phased approach will allow for special care of the fields while keeping the other CORP facilities publicly available.

Background

CORP is a 269-acre public park operated by the City and County of Honolulu’s Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), District 5. CORP includes: 20 tennis courts, the K. Mark Takai Veterans Memorial Aquatics Center, four youth baseball diamonds, four regulation (adult) baseball diamonds, four softball fields, a 20-lane archery range, and a number of multi-purpose fields, playgrounds, and comfort stations all encircled by a walking path. In March 2021 CORP added a 12,800 square foot dog park for both big and small dogs.

CORP is a globally recognized recreation facility which hosts various national and international sporting events. Most recently, the facility hosted *its first National Pickleball Tournament*, the 2022 Junior Pan Pacific Swimming Championships, Olympic Men’s National Water Polo teams from the U.S.A. and Australia, and regularly supports statewide softball tournaments. Perhaps the most notable feature of CORP is the family friendly feel to the facility, which has garnered a 4.5 star rating on Google Maps and Yelp.

Maintenance Issues

Checklist for Field Repairs and Preventative Maintenance	
CORP	MSS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water/saturate field• Line field• Remove excess cinder• Submit supplemental work orders for bleachers, dugouts, fencing etc.• Monitoring status of fields overall• Spray out overgrowth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spray weeds (Large scale)• Aerate, pull cores• Verticut• Apply fertilizer (Large Scale)• Spray out overgrowth (Large scale)• Skin/Level field*• Level lips*

*CORP can accomplish with specialized equipment.

Current Situation

CORP is highly utilized year-round, with over 300,000 estimated park users enjoying the facilities based on annually approved permits (see table below). When not in use by college and high school baseball/softball teams, the fields are used by club ball teams and tournaments. There is no other ball field facility like CORP on the island of Oahu.

8/1/2021-8/31/2022	Facility Permits Issued	Attendance
Softball Fields	441	59,070
Adult Baseball Fields	102	162,116
Youth Baseball Fields	97	82,875
Total	640	304,061

Building on Community Engagement

The unique structure of District 5, prior to the most recent reorganization with the neighboring District 3, allowed CORP staff to build strong relationships with user groups and with the CORP Citizens Advisory Committee. CORP staff held initial discussions with these segments of the community, and generally speaking these user groups are supportive of the proposed maintenance plan. These recommended actions will outline a plan to implement the maintenance schedule, with the community having an additional opportunity to comment on whether or not they support the seasonal closure of select fields at CORP for refurbishment. The primary means of this community engagement will be through an online survey.

Current Practice vs. Preferred Practice

The current annual maintenance program for the ball fields at CORP includes regular mowing and infield grading. This schedule is limited and outpaced by current use levels in the following ways:

Current Practice	Preferred Practice
Ball field maintenance is incorporated into the overall maintenance plan for the 269-acre park.	Implement and maintain dedicated annual maintenance program for ball fields. Annual shut- down for refurbishment will be conducted June thru August. Months selected is based on checking on scheduling (years past) and grass growth.
Staffing shortage. Current 12 week schedule is hindering large park projects during the week.	Recruit and hire more part time workers to work weekends. Call Contract Portal individuals. Transition full-time staff to Monday thru Friday operation. Fields can be worked on more often and specialized field maintenance can be completed.
Current Practice	Preferred Practice
Reactive to issues as problems/complaints arise.	Maintain a record of completed maintenance. Carry out regular maintenance and preventative maintenance schedules.
Equipment for maintenance is basic.	Procure specialized equipment for excellent maintenance of ball fields. (Sand Pro infield attachments). Possible use of Special Funds.
High dependency on MSS which is subject to competing priorities and island-wide emergencies	Outline expectations for proper ball field maintenance with MSS on a regular basis. Conduct site staff training of specialized equipment (Sand Pro) to lessen the load on MSS.
Does not include volunteer support of ball field maintenance.	Incorporate Adopt-a-Park Program and other volunteer give back opportunities for field users to contribute to the upkeep of ball fields. Encourage community engagement and strengthen their connections to the park.
High use does not allow for any fields to rest and recover.	Create a rotating schedule of field closures to allow for annual maintenance. 2 fields in different quads per year for a maximum of 3 months.
Public support and buy-in noted via emails and/or phone calls.	Launch public survey to document support. Format survey electronically. Set Public Notice and deadline for survey. Gather results. Unfold anything overlooked. Take action.

Conclusion

This proposal helped DPR staff discover the underlying issues that have affected the upkeep of the CORP ball fields, including: staffing, specialized equipment, and preventative maintenance. Addressing these issues will enhance the ball fields for residents and visitors for many years to come.